



## 2016 Facts about Missouri Dental Hygienists

**Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs)** are licensed oral health professionals who use preventive, educational and therapeutic methods to prevent oral diseases in an effort to achieve oral health. A **state license** and the **RDH designation** assure patients that the person providing preventive oral health care has graduated from an accredited college or university and has completed national and regional board examinations. MDHA strongly opposes any lessening of educational standards or requirements for oral health care providers.

**Education:** Dental hygienists must be educated in a post-secondary dental hygiene program that is accredited by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation (CODA). The minimum length of most programs is three years due to required prerequisite coursework; however, the average credit hours received for a dental hygiene program is eighty-four (84) hours for an associate degree and one hundred and eighteen (118) hours for a baccalaureate degree.<sup>1</sup> There are baccalaureate and master's degree programs for dental hygienists in Missouri.

Dental hygiene education includes an average of 3016 clock hours with over six hundred (681) clock hours of supervised pre-clinical and clinical dental hygiene instruction.<sup>2</sup>

In Missouri, there are eight dental hygiene programs that can **potentially graduate over 229 dental hygienists per year**. \* Missouri Southern State University has a main campus in Joplin and two additional distance-learning sites in Rolla and Sikeston. The distance sites opened in 2007 and extended dental hygiene education to rural areas around the state. The first distance education students graduated in May 2009. Since then, there have been three more dental hygiene programs added in the St. Joseph, Kansas City and St. Louis areas. **Note that the potential number of dental hygiene graduates has doubled in the last ten years.** The schools include:

- Missouri Southern State University in Joplin-30 students
  - Two distance education sites
    - Rolla-10 students
    - Sikeston-10 students
- Ozark Technical College in Springfield-18 students
- University of Missouri-Kansas City in Kansas City-30 students
- St. Louis Community College at Forest Park-32 students
- State Fair Community College in Sedalia-10 students
- Missouri College in St. Louis (opened in fall 2009)-30 students (graduate 30 every 18 months)\*
- Hillyard Technical College (associated with North Central Missouri College in Trenton, MO; opened in fall 2009)-10 students (graduate every 22 months)
- Concorde Career College in Kansas City (opened March 2010)-24 students (graduate every 18 months)\*

\*This includes at least twenty-five (27) potential students who graduate in the interim six-month period in the two 18-month programs.

**Regulation:** Missouri dental hygienists are licensed and regulated through the Missouri Dental Board. In addition, there is a five-member Advisory Commission for Dental Hygienists (ACDH) which makes

recommendations to the board on dental hygiene education, examination, licensure, practice, and discipline of dental hygienists. The Missouri Dental Board currently has one (1) hygienist, five (5) dentists and one (1) public member.

**Laws:** Laws and rules regulating dental hygienists are found in the Missouri Dental Practice Act under Chapter 332.RSMo.

**Licensure:** After completion of an accredited dental hygiene program, a dental hygiene candidate for licensure must take a written National Dental Hygiene Board Examination, a clinical exam, and a jurisprudence test on Missouri laws in order to obtain a Missouri license. Licensure by credentials is available to dental hygienists who have been actively practicing for two years in another state.

**Practice:** Dental hygienists perform preventive oral health services such as preliminary clinical exams of teeth and oral tissues, scaling and polishing of the teeth, the identification and treatment of gingivitis and periodontal disease, radiograph (x-ray) exposure, sealant placement, fluoride application, oral health education, and other applicable services. Missouri dental hygienists may give local anesthesia and administer nitrous oxide analgesia and place certain types of fillings with additional education.

**Supervision:** In Missouri, dental hygienists may work under the general supervision of the dentist in any setting, which means the dentist does not have to be present when the dental hygienist performs clinical services within twelve months of a dentist's exam.

**Public Health Settings:** Since 2001, laws provide that dental hygienists with three years of experience may perform certain preventive services (cleanings, fluoride, sealants) without a dentist's supervision on medically assisted children in public health settings with reimbursement to the facility by MoHealthNet.

**Continuing Education:** The Missouri Dental Practice Act requires that dental hygienists receive thirty (30) hours of continuing education every two years along with Basic Life Support certification renewal.

**Manpower Issues:** According to the July 2015 Missouri Dental Board data, 2991 dental hygienists and 2526 general dentists have a Missouri address. Since 2000, there has been a steady increase of 1559 licensed dental hygienists and 192 licensed general dentists.

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1. American Dental Hygienists' Association (ADHA) 2012 Dental Hygiene Program Director Survey, 2014, ADHA, (Unofficial)
2. American Dental Association (ADA) 2013-14 Survey of Allied Dental Education, 2015, ADA Survey Center (
3. [http://www.adha.org/downloads/edu/dh\\_ed\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.adha.org/downloads/edu/dh_ed_fact_sheet.pdf)